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The Pearl Preview

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pearl, MS

SPRING
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Message from the Area Conservationist

Dear Area 2 Conservationists:

Now that spring is upon us (almost summer already), we are doing the best we can to put conservation on the ground within Area 2. Although we have received a 2014 Farm Bill, we have yet to see what is to come from it; and certain parts of it lack direction for implementation.

It's almost a thankfulness that we have this lull in our area at the moment, because the manure management plans are coming at us fast and furious.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality has issued a notice of intent; and farmers are now bringing in their plans for us to do them; and they want them done "now." Of course, we can only do them as fast as our people are able to do them!



From left: Area Conservationists Wesley Kerr and David Brunson; MACD Central Vice President Jerry Smith; and State Soil Scientist Delaney Johnson, attending MACD.

But once again it's time for some seasonal practices such as planting grasses and legumes and getting conservation on the ground. With that I'm going to say, "get it done!"

Good luck to all of you for a successful year!

David Brunson
Area Conservationist



Area 2 staff left to right: Rogerick Thompson, Nathan Tadlock, Joe Addy, Kelvin Jackson, Murray Fulton, Julie Darden-Kent, David Brunson, Phillip Archie, Bill Russell, Wallace Cade, and Jerry Orr. Not pictured: Malcolm Lowe and Priscilla Williamson.

"Helping People Help the Land"
USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Allen Curry
New Resource Soil Scientist

Photo by Murray Fulton

Allen Curry, **pictured at left** standing in a newly dug soil pit (**see page 11**), is a 35 year-old native of Port Gibson, MS. He graduated from Alcorn State University with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture—Plant & Soil Science. He has been a federal employee since 1999, serving as student trainee from 1999 to 2001 in Natchez. He also served in the position as Soil Scientist in Natchez from 2002 to 2004; then as Soil Conservationist in Area 3 including Lucedale, Vancleave, Gulfport and Wiggins from 2004 to 2007. From 2007 to 2014 he served as Soil Conservationist in Canton from where he recently came to the Area 2 office as the new Resource Soil Scientist.

Allen attends Holy Child Jesus Catholic Church in Canton, resides in Madison, and has been a widower since 2011. He enjoys reading, living a life of service, and BASKETBALL!

Allen stated, "It feels good to return back to my roots as a Soil Scientist, for soils are the foundation of our agency and basis of our mission to conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. I must say that I am grateful. Over the past 10 years, the exposure in the field of conservation has equipped me with the fundamental tools to build my career path and to be knowledgeable of the detail. I'm eager to assist in any way possible."



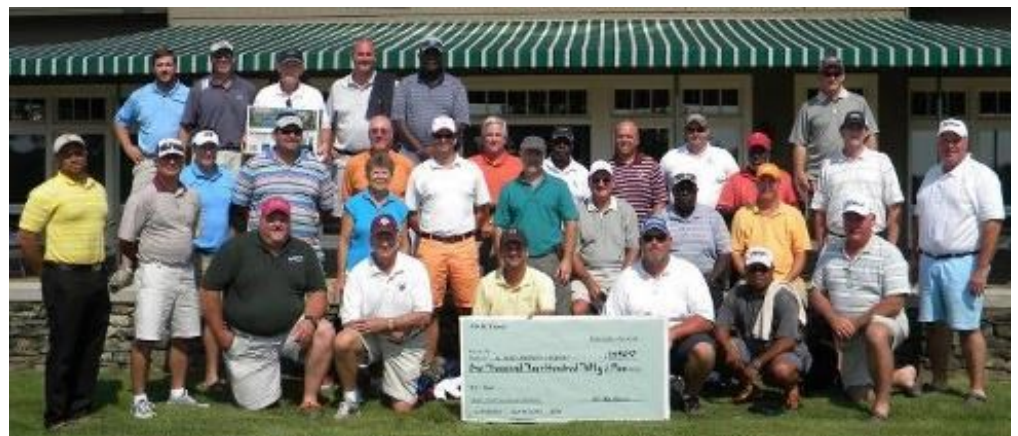
Mark Scott, New Area PEO Civil Engineering Technician



Mark Scott started with NRCS in September 1987 at the Project Engineer Office in Brandon, MS, as a Civil Engineering Technician. In 2000 he moved to the Brandon Field Office as Soil Conservation Technician where he worked for 14 years. In early 2014 he was promoted to the Area Office Civil Engineering Technician position as Area Technician.

On a special note, in 1989 Scott started the NRCS, FSA, and RD Charity Golf Tournament (MS AG Classic) with teams from Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee. All the money from these tournaments is donated to either Blair E. Batson or St. Jude's Children's Hospitals. "This will be our 25th year for the tournament," stated Scott (**see picture of 2013 Tournament participants at right**).

Scott has been married for 18 years and has one son. His hobbies include hunting (**as you can see from his picture at upper right**), fishing and golf.



WELCOME NEW AREA 2 EMPLOYEES (Continued)



J. J. Smith, New Area Soil Conservationist in Pearl Area Office.

"Greetings, I am Janeiro (J.J.) Smith. I am pleased to be the newest addition to the Pearl Area Office. I began my career with the NRCS as a Soil Conservation Technician in Rolling Fork, MS, over twelve years ago in 2002. I have held several different positions since that time including Soil Conservation Technician for Sharkey and Issaquena Counties in Area 4, which is comprised of the Mississippi Delta; Program Assistant for Area 4; Soil Conservationist for Area 4 in Sharkey and Issaquena Counties; Area 2 in Lowndes County, and for Area 3 in Jefferson County. I have also acted as District Conservationist in each previous Soil Conservationists' appointments.

"I was born in the small town of Mound Bayou, MS, in Bolivar County; and raised by two educators—Joseph and Juanita Smith—in the town of Utica. There I attended Hinds Agricultural High School from 1992 to 1996. After graduation, I elected to attend Alcorn State University where I majored in chemistry. After graduation in 2001, I decided that a life in the laboratory would probably not be fulfilling for a country boy, so I began working on a degree in agronomy, which led me to the NRCS. Presently, I have transferred here from the Fayette Field Office.

"At Alcorn, I met my wife Melissa Smith who is currently a biology teacher at Vicksburg High School. The Lord has blessed us with two sons— Joseph Corbyn (Trey) Smith, who is 4 years old; and Jaxon Curtis (Jax) Smith who just turned two months.

"I enjoy fishing, reading, cooking, small home improvement projects, and spending time with friends and family.

"As the newly appointed Soil Conservationist for Area 2, my goal is in lock step with the mission of our agency, to "Help People Help the Land." I look forward to assisting the area office staff in providing you with the quality service you expect and deserve."

Brent Long, New Soil Conservationist in Starkville, Oktibbeha County.



Brent Long is our new Soil Conservationist currently serving the Starkville Field Office in Oktibbeha County. He's originally from Duck Hill. He graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in Agricultural Engineering Technology & Business Management with an emphasis in Natural Resources Management. He served four years active duty in the Air Force and currently serves in the Air National Guard. Before joining NRCS, he worked as a Natural Resources Specialist for the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission. He joined our team March 24, 2014, and we are very excited to have him in Area 2!



Scott Norwood, New Soil Conservation Technician in Columbus, Lowndes County.

Scott Norwood is a native of Bellefontaine, Mississippi; and he is a graduate of Eupora High School in Webster County. Scott also has a Bachelors degree from Mississippi State University in Agricultural Engineering Technology and Business. He previously worked for the Mississippi Department of Transportation project office before starting as the Soil Conservation Technician with NRCS in Lowndes County on March 24, 2014. Scott enjoys hunting and fishing and is excited to begin his career with NRCS.



WELCOME NEW AREA 2 EMPLOYEES (Continued)

***Lori Blackston, New District Clerk in
Columbus, Lowndes County***

Lori is a native of Columbus and enjoys living and working in her hometown and spending time with her two children. She is a graduate of Caldwell High School and the Mississippi University for Women. She currently has a Bachelor's degree in Office Administration and a master's in Business Education. Lori is one of four daughters to John and the late Barbara Oswalt of Columbus and is a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church.



***John Locke, New Soil Conservationist in
Mendenhall, Simpson County***

"I grew up in Columbus and graduated from MSU with a BS in Forestry. Wilkinson County was home for 22 years while I served as the County Forester for the Mississippi Forestry Commission. From there, I moved up to the Southwest District Office in Brookhaven for two years where I primarily handled fire, fleet management, and purchasing. I ended my career with the MFC after 5 years in the Capital District office in Pearl where my duties included private lands management program supervision, purchasing, fire, fleet management, training, safety, and several years as board member for the Pearl River Water Supply District.

I have been married to April for 25 years and have two daughters. Free time is spent with family, amateur radio, fishing and shooting."

***Hope Collins,
New Soil
Conservation
Technician in
Forest, Scott
County***



"I am Hope Collins. My hometown is Bolton, MS, and I'm an eight year resident of Raymond, MS. I'm the proud Mother of Dexter (13) and Tyiunna (15) Johnson. I am a faithful member of Springhill Christian Center of Raymond, and I graduated from Raymond High School in 1995. Being the first of seven children to graduate from a college or university, I attended and graduated from Hinds Community College magna cum laude receiving the top Agribusiness and Ag Club Award in May 2011. I hold a category X certification from the MS Bureau of Plant Industry. I'm presently majoring in Business at Mississippi State University Distance Learning Program. I love God, family, gardening, friends, and nature. A quote that keeps me motivated is by Norman Vincent Peale: "Believe in yourself, have faith in your abilities. Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers, you cannot be successful or happy." Thank you NRCS family for having me, and I look forward to working with you in the upcoming future."



***LaDonna Crotwell, New District Clerk in
Brandon, Rankin County***

LaDonna Crotwell became the District Clerk for the Rankin County SWCD in August 2013. Prior to coming to the Rankin SWCD, Mrs. Crotwell worked as a paralegal for 24 years. A graduate of MS University for Women, Mrs. Crotwell resides in the Pelahatchie, MS, area with her husband, Tony Crotwell, and son, Eric. Her hobbies include fishing, scrapbooking and cooking.



"CLASS ACT" FARM WINS NATIONAL POULTRY AWARD

Story submitted by Kelvin Jackson

Hilton Davis Farms LLC., located in Clarke County, was selected as the Southeast region winner of the 2014 U.S. Poultry and Egg Association Environmental Excellence Award. The award was presented on Jan. 28, 2014, at the 2014 International Poultry Exposition in Atlanta, GA. The farm was in competition based on its display of environmental stewardship. NRCS has worked diligently with the operation's poultry, cattle, and timber productions and continues to implement conservation practices on the land. *(See copy of news release below.)*



For Immediate Release

U.S. Poultry & Egg Association

Contact Gwen Venable, gvenable@uspoultry.org

February 3, 2014

Hilton Davis Farms Recognized for Environmental Excellence by USPOULTRY

ATLANTA, GA – Hilton Davis Farms LLC in Waynesboro, Miss., was one of six farms across the United States to receive U.S. Poultry & Egg Association's Family Farm Environmental Excellence Award during the International Poultry Expo, part of the 2014 International Production & Processing Expo, in Atlanta. U.S. Poultry & Egg Association (USPOULTRY) sponsors the annual awards in recognition of exemplary environmental stewardship by family farmers engaged in poultry and egg production.

Applicants were rated in several categories, including dry litter or liquid manure management, nutrient management planning, community involvement, wildlife enhancement techniques, innovative nutrient management techniques, and participation in education or outreach programs. Applications were reviewed and farm visits conducted by a team of environmental professionals from universities, regulatory agencies, and state trade associations in selecting national winners in six regions.

Hilton Davis Farms is owned and operated by Hilton and Denise Davis. The farm is 450 acres and consists of 10 broiler houses with a total capacity of 280,800 birds per flock. The farm grows broilers for Marshall Durbin. The farm also supports a 100 brood cow operation.

Hilton Davis Farms utilizes a nutrient management plan for applying litter to their land, along with a composting program to dispose of mortality. Utilizing cost share grants from the National Resource Conservation Service, Hilton and Denise built an efficient multi-lane composting structure to handle the volume of mortality from their 10-house broiler farm. The Hiltons took great care when selecting the location of the composting structure to ensure it would not negatively impact the environment. To help enhance wildlife, Hilton and Denise have multiple wildlife enhancement areas maintained throughout the year to help sustain and attract wildlife.

Hilton Davis Farms LLC Recognized for Environmental Excellence

Hilton and Denise Davis received the USPOULTRY Family Farm Environmental Excellence Award at the International Poultry Expo, part of the 2014 International Production & Processing Expo in Atlanta. They were presented with an award to display at the entrance to their farm and a \$1,000 check by Elton Maddox (right), USPOULTRY chairman.

U.S. Poultry & Egg Association (USPOULTRY) is the all-feather organization representing the complete spectrum of today's poultry industry, whose mission is to progressively serve member companies through research, education, communication, and technical assistance. Founded in 1947, U.S. Poultry & Egg Association is based in Tucker, GA.

<http://www.wtok.com/home/headlines/Local-Family-Farm-is-Finalist-for-National-Environmental-Award-236834601.html>



Elton Maddox, 2014 USPOULTRY chairman and president and CEO of Wayne Farms, Oakwood, Ga., presented the award to the Davis family.

THE TIME TO PLANT FOR ANTLERS

By Jason Keenan



Stealth Cam 066 F 08-20-2013 02:47:46

Deer at night. Photo by Wallace Cade

Every game hunter wants to land the biggest and most decorative mount they can. For those after the white-tailed deer in Mississippi, the antler is the prized part, besides a few pounds of venison. What is often overlooked is what time of year these majestic animals grow those antlers.

For years, the hunting community tried to provide "green" growing food in the winter when they feel food resources are low. Food resources are low in the winter time, but that is not the time to plant for your trophy bucks. If a land manager is planting in September and October for antler growth, they have already missed the boat.

Antlers are shed each year in the late winter (February and March), and start their regrowth shortly after. That is the time to concentrate on manipulating what we can to grow larger antlers. Although age and genetics play a part

in antler growth, nutrition is one of the bigger contributors to their size. We as land managers can contribute to their growth with either pelleted feed, dried corn, or growing a food crop. The food crop is often referred to as a *food plot*, but I argue this point. Most of the *food plots* planted are what I call *harvest plots*. *Harvest plots* are simply green patches in the winter time. Typically these are clovers, winter rye, rye grass, wheat and oats. Food crops for antler growth need to be higher in nutritional value and grow in the warm season. These include soybeans, corn, other beans, buckwheat, and even joint vetches.

Each plot needs to be treated as if it were a full crop. Plots need to be over a half acre in size and have adequate sunlight and water. Soil tests and soil amendments (fertilizer and lime) are a must as well. The reasoning behind this is because with proper management you can gain more nutrition from the plant. For example, a corn stalk can grow three to four ears of corn with proper nutrient management versus one to two ears for a plant and walk away operation. Those extra ears of corn equate to thicker and larger antlers.

Remember the time of year when white-tails need their nutrition the most for antler growth is through the summer. Don't wait too late and then wonder why you never see larger antlers on your wall.

For more information, go to: <http://msucares.com/wildfish/index.html> or visit your local MSU extension center, contact your local MDWFP private lands biologist <http://www.mdwfp.com/wildlife-hunting/private-land-habitat.aspx>, or contact your local NRCS office.



Left above: Mark Scott captured this deer in Simpson county on a game camera. **Right:** Deer feeder activity in Noxubee County. Photo by Wallace Cade.

unlock the SECRETS IN THE SOIL

Mississippi Cover Crop and Soil Health Forum

Photos by Judi Craddock

One of five Mississippi Cover Crop and Soil Health Forums was held in Brandon on February 18 at the Rankin County Extension Office. Facilitated by Area Conservationist David Brunson, the purpose of the forum was presented by State Conservationist Kurt Readus. Managing the land for soil health is one of the most successful and valuable ways to improve and protect the environment as well as increase crop production and profit margins for farmers. Over 50 percent of soil organic matter (nutrients) are lost within 20 years when tilled. The use of no-till practices along with cover crops can quickly lead to increased organic matter by breaking up compacted soil, reducing moisture loss and decreasing carbon release.



David Brunson facilitated the Forum, hosted by Rankin County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Cover crops include rye, wheat, oats, clovers and other legumes, turnips and radishes, usually planted in late summer or fall around harvest time and before spring planting of the following year's crops. NRCS State Agronomist Walter Jackson, NRCS Soil Scientist Rachael Stout-Evans, and ARS Research Leader Seth Dabney made presentations on adopting soil health management systems and the use of cover crops in Mississippi. A live video broadcast featuring USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and Howard G. Buffett [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)], and other USDA-NRCS key leaders was also held.



Walter Jackson made a presentation on soil health and importance of cover crops.



Jack Winstead and David Brunson visit during the Forum.



Kurt Readus opened and explained the benefits and purpose of the Forum.



A number of statewide stakeholders, members of the statewide technical committee, extension agents, farmers, conservation districts, agri-business, as well as NRCS employees were present to hear information on soil health and cover crops.



Water Primrose (*Jussiaea spp = Ludwigia spp*)
A common weed found in Mississippi ponds, lakes, ditches, and swamps. Requires treatment to prevent problems in private ponds.
Photo by Joshua Tilley.

Fish Pond Management

By Joshua Tilley

It's almost spring time again and we are already wishing for some great fishing weather. Now is the time to fertilize your private fishing ponds if you have not already. Pond fertilization is a great management tool because it can decrease the amount of unwanted weeds and algae that grow on the bottom of ponds when the water is very clear. However, before you fertilize your pond, here are a few things that you may want to think about.

First, in order for the fertilizer to work, the alkalinity of the pond water must correct in order for the fertilizer to work; and you will not know this unless you have the water tested. If you need an alkalinity test, bring a water sample into our office and we can test it for you. When the alkalinity of the pond is low, lime is required in order to raise the alkalinity so that the fertilizer will

work. As a general rule of thumb lime should be applied in the fall, because under normal circumstances it takes 3 months for the alkalinity to reach the appropriate level. Lime should be applied at a rate of 2 tons to the acre. Hydrated lime which is a more concentrated form of lime should never be used because it is harmful to fish and could cause the fish to die.

Secondly, the most economical fertilizer to use as stated in the publication, "Managing Mississippi Farm Ponds and Small Lakes," is Triple Super Phosphate or 0-46-0. Phosphorous is the key ingredient needed when fertilizing fish ponds. The phosphorous will cause the pond to turn a shade of green, and this will prevent the weeds and algae from growing on the bottom of the pond. If applying fertilizer in a powder form, it is best to apply when water temperature is approximately 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Powdered fertilizers are easy to use; they dissolve fast and work fast to make the pond "Bloom." It is highly important that all fertilizers be applied at the rates listed on their containers, because too much fertilizer can be worse than not enough. If too much fertilizer is applied, it will cause excess pond bloom; and if this should "die off" and begin to deteriorate, it will take oxygen out of the water and kill the fish.

The third point that should be considered when managing ponds by fertilization is always remember that when you begin a fertilization program, it is highly important that you continue that program from year to year. Discontinuing a fertilization program could leave you worse off than if you never started one at all.

If you would like assistance on managing your fish pond, you can contact our office at 662-328-5921 Ext. 3 or come by our office at 2282 Martin Luther King Drive, Suite 1.



Left: Sediment basin; **above:** Duck weed seed in a jar. Photos submitted by Joshua Tilley.



Pictured above are NRCS Soil Conservationist Brad Mitchell; Supervisory District Conservationist Murray Fulton; Althea Johnson; and District Administrator Lynn Porter.



Pictured above are NRCS Soil Conservationist Brad Mitchell and Supervisory District Conservationist Murray Fulton reading "The Lorax" to third grade students.



Brad and Murray answering questions.

Read Across America 2014 Jackson Field Office

Story and Photos submitted by Lynn Porter

Jackson Field Office employees Brad Mitchell and Murray Fulton participated in "Read Across America 2014" Celebration during March. Hinds County SWCD Earth Team Volunteers assisted as well. This year Bates and Lake Elementary Schools were blessed with the two NRCS employees taking time from their schedule to support this important event held every year. Brad and Murray, first time participants, read from "The Lorax" in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday; and they even answered questions about conservation with a 5th grade class on various tools used in the field for conservation planning. A total of 25 classrooms and 400 students were read to during the event.

So much of the focus of NRCS has been on the Farm Bill, but the Hinds County Soil and Water Conservation District expressed their sincere appreciation for NRCS' continued support for educating our young citizens on their stewardship responsibility. The continued partnership between NRCS and Districts is crucial for an effective environmental education program.



Brad and Murray in Ms. Terrell's class.



Read Across America 2014

SMITH COUNTY TREE PLANTING DAY

Story and Photos by Judi Craddock

As a first-time observer of “how it’s done” when it comes to tree planting day preparations, there is one thing evident for sure. Smith County folks know exactly what they’re doing! Earth Team volunteers, MSWCC, District, and NRCS employees, as well as other helpers that show up each February to assist have done this for so many years, they have this “prep day” down to an art. A huge assortment of trees are sorted, bagged, tagged and arranged alphabetically according to previous orders from folks throughout the county; all ready for pickup the next morning. It’s a perfect assembly line! Congratulations on a very successful Tree Planting Day this year, Smith County folks! A special thanks to the Earth Team!



Above: Smith County Earth Team Volunteers Delores Pell and Jane Burrows know the annual routine!



Left: Lee Smith, MSWCC; and Julie Bradford, NRCS, help along with volunteers.



Right: Volunteers Carrie Harris and Sybil Burns wrap and tag trees.



Jason Keenan, Area Wildlife Biologist, stops by to lend a hand!



Volunteers Sue Moore, Joyce Dickerson, and Ruby Mae Wedgeworth sort and assemble trees according to each order, checking it twice!



Debbie Smith is hard at work!



Ruby Mae Wedgeworth, always there for Earth Team work!



Delores Pell and Jane Burrows sort trees with Julie Bradford.



Pictured above, Brad Mitchell and Don Lackey, NRCS; Carl Felix, and Richard Jones, Hinds County Department of Public Works.

SOIL AND LAND JUDGING TRAINING BROWN LOAM EXPERIMENT STATION, HINDS COUNTY

*Taken from Story by Murray Fulton, District
Conservationist
Photos by Murray Fulton*

Soil is a basic natural resource used by humans to meet one or more of their needs. It provides raw materials, stores water and nutrients, and supports growing plants that produce food and fiber. It also provides space for cities, highways, recreation, and wildlife. Nothing surrounds us more in our daily lives; but like so many things important to life, soil goes unnoticed until we learn to appreciate it.

Land judging is a recently added judging event in the field of agriculture for FFA and 4-H Land Judging teams. Land can be judged much like animals or crops. In judging crops, we look at the size, shape, and quality and determine which is the best. Similarly, when judging

land, we look for clues that tell us how well the land can produce crops or be used for other purposes. Soil characteristics, climate, and topography are good clues to the soil's capabilities; but close examination of the soil texture, structure, depth, permeability, reaction, degree of erosion, slope, drainage, and flooding potential are necessary to classify land into capability classes.

In land judging, the major factors affecting how the land can be used must be determined. These factors are used to correctly recommend conservation practices and fertilizers for conserving soil. Land judging can help to:

- Understand basic soil differences.
- Know how soil properties affect crop growth.
- Know why soils respond differently to management practices.
- Realize the influence of land features on production and land protection.

A soils and land judging training session for team leaders of Future Farmers of America (FFA) teams and 4-H teams was recently provided at the Brown Loam Experiment Station. Many thanks to some dedicated professionals from Mississippi State University (Dr. Billy Kingery); Central MS Research & Extension Center (Dr. Sherry Bell Surrence); Brown Loam Experiment Station (Dr. Bisoonat Macoon); Hinds County Department of Public Works (Carl Felix, Richard Jones, Bill Flowers); and Natural Resources Conservation Service (Joe Addy, Mike Lilly, Allen Curry, Rachel Stout-Evans). Some 35 students and judging team leaders were trained in preparation for the state contest held on March 20, 2014, in Starkville, Mississippi, on MSU's South Farm.



Don Lackey looks on as the soil pit is dug for the training session.



Above: Rachel Stout-Evans, Soil Scientist (far right), teaches youth about soils; Right: Mike Lilly gives out instructions.



BEFORE AND AFTER PHOTOS, EWP PROJECTS IN AREA 2

Submitted by Shannon McCarty



Town of Flora Sewer Lagoon Outlet Structure Before Picture



Town of Flora Sewer Lagoon Outlet Structure After Picture



City of Ridgeland Parkside Village Site Before Picture



City of Ridgeland Parkside Village Site After Picture



City of Ridgeland Pear Orchard Rd Site Before Picture



City of Ridgeland Pear Orchard Rd Site After Picture

BEFORE AND AFTER EWP SITES THROUGHOUT AREA 2 (CONTINUED)

Submitted by Shannon McCarty



City of Ridgeland Pear Orchard Rd Site Before Picture



City of Ridgeland Pear Orchard Rd Site After Picture



City of Philadelphia Beacon Street Site Before Picture



City of Philadelphia Beacon Street Site After Picture



City of Philadelphia Hospital Site Before Picture



City of Philadelphia Hospital Site After Picture

USDA Community Garden Boys and Girls Club Meridian, MS

*Submitted by Kelvin Jackson
Photos by Joxelle Velazquez*

Kids at the Boys and Girls Club in Meridian harvested Kale that was growing in their USDA Community Garden recently, then donated it to Love's Kitchen.

Congratulations to Supervisory District Conservationist Kelvin Jackson in Meridian, and his staff, for a great job in teaching children the benefits of growing their own food.



Kelvin Jackson shows kids at the Boys and Girls Club in Meridian how to harvest the kale that they have been growing in the USDA Community Garden. See other photos below taken by Joxelle Velazquez.



LAUDERDALE COUNTY COVER CROPS SMALL FARM INCUBATOR CENTER PRESTON, MISSISSIPPI

Submitted by Kelvin Jackson and Walter Jackson

Photos by Joxelle Velazquez



These pictures show cover crops that have been continuously tilled on the same field for many years. A mixture of rye, tillage radish, and crimson clover was planted as a cover crop at the Alcorn State University Small Farm Incubator Center located in Preston, Mississippi. These crops were selected because of their individual properties, all designed to improve soil health. Rye produces an abundance of biomass and has a robust root system which can penetrate hardened soil layers and increase water infiltration. Tillage radish has a huge taproot which serves as nature's own sodbuster; and crimson clover can produce as much as 200-250 pounds of nitrogen per acre which can be available for the following cropland and aid in the decomposition of biomass.



These fields are planted to cover crops to improve organic matter, improve bio-diversity of microorganisms, aid in drought resistance, and improve the physical and chemical properties of the soil.



MACD AREA 2 AWARDS AND CANDIDS



Mike Lilly receives MACD Friend of Conservation Award from Steve Cantrell, MACD President.



Nathan Tadlock receives Overall Photo Contest Winner Award.



Makayla Russell receives Poster Contest Award for 2nd-3rd Grades.



Celia Miller accepts a Photo Award for Montana Miller, Youth Conservation in Action.



Dr. Cindy Ayers Elliott, Hinds County SWCD Commissioner, discusses the Farming and Football success story (Wingfield High School) during District Employee Training.



New Rankin County District Clerk LaDonna Crotwell works on a twig picture frame during the District Employee Training.



Brother and sister Zack and Savannah Shepherd were awarded first place in 10th-11th grade conservation poster contest (Zack) and Special Category (Savannah).



Tina Craft receives MACD Photo Award.



Renee Smith, Clinton High School teacher, accepts award for 1st Place Essay Winner Arthi Reddy.



David Brunson and Bill Russell visit during MACD.



David Brunson and Wallace Cade enjoy the Endowment reception and auction.

MACD AREA 2 CANDIDS

Photos by Deborah Logan and Judi Craddock



EARTH DAY 2014 AT THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

*Photos by Kavanaugh Breazeale
NRCS State Office Public Affairs Specialist*

Earth Day 2014, April 22, was a very special day for environmental education at the Mississippi School for the Deaf. Presentations on a variety of subjects including wildlife and soils were given to elementary, middle and high school students by employees with the Hinds County Soil and Water Conservation District, Hinds County NRCS Field Office, as well as the NRCS Area 2 Office. For a few presenters, it was their first time at this school. The students all enjoyed learning about the importance of conserving our natural resources, and learning where our food and fiber come from. All of us came away truly inspired by the amazing and dedicated educators of this establishment along with a new perspective on education for deaf children. A special thanks to Lynn Porter who coordinated this event.



Above: Mississippi School for the Deaf teacher/interpreter and Hinds County District Administrator Lynn Porter introduce Sammy Soil (District Technician Phillip Mikell) to the elementary students.



Left: Soil Conservationist Brad Mitchell and Supervisory District Conservationist Murray Fulton explain to the children what animals need in order to survive (food, shelter, water) and where it all comes from—our natural resources (SWAPA—soil, water, air, plants and animals).



Above: Lynn Porter (sitting on far left) posing with Dr. Vivian Smith, Allen Curry (standing far left), Phillip Mikell (standing far right) and Mike Lilly (standing third from the right) along with MSD high school students in the soils class. Photo by Judi Craddock.



Above right: Resource Soil Scientist Allen Curry explains the importance of soils and characteristics of different types of soils to the high school students. After his presentation, he gave the students a surprise test to see how well they paid attention to the sign language interpreter (Dr. Vivian Smith) who assisted him. This was a unique experience for Allen who did a great job in connecting with the students!



Right: Area Wildlife Biologist Jason Keenan demonstrates animal skulls and skeletons to the children, letting them guess what animal it is. You can only imagine the questions that came from the fascinated students!

State Envirothon Competition Roosevelt State Park May 2, 2014

The State Envirothon, sponsored by the Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts, was held May 2 at Roosevelt State Park in Morton. Schools from around the state competed at conservation testing stations that included Wildlife, Soils, Aquatics, Forestry, and Current Events. Assisting in the day's competition included Earth Team Volunteers, MSWCC, MACD, NRCS, MSU, Extension Service, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality; and Mississippi Forestry Commission. Congratulations goes to first place winner, Hillcrest Christian School! Other winners were: second place—Oxford High School; third place—DeSoto Central High School; fourth place—Indianola High School; and fifth place—Strayhorn FFA. Congratulations to all!



NRCS Asst. State Soil Scientist James Curtis; and Soil Scientist-MLRA Project Leader Rachel Stout-Evans grade test papers at the Soils station.



Mike Lilly, ACES employee, and Laura Beiser, MDEQ, review the schedule for the morning.



Above: Students discuss their answers before turning in test.



Students take a quick rest before leaving for the next testing station.



Above: NRCS' Jason Keenan, Area 2 Wildlife Biologist; and John DeFazio, Area 1 Wildlife Biologist; prepare for students at the Wildlife station.



Above: Students at the soil pit.



Above: District Clerks Gail Causey (Amite County), and Hope Daley (Jefferson Davis County) grade test papers at the Current Events station.



Left: Lance Middleton, South Area Rep., MSWCC, gives instructions to the students before testing. Right: Jason Keenan and John DeFazio give instructions as well.



MISCELLANEOUS FEATURED PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE AREA



Above: Happy Spring Equinox 2014! Photos are in celebration of the first day of Spring. The compilation is from pictures taken of the ecological season (2013-2014) in the Meridian, MS, vicinity. **Photos taken and compilation designed by the talented Joxelle Velazquez.**



Joxelle Velazquez shows material on soils to Clarkdale High School Students on their Career Day. Photo by Kelvin Jackson.



David Brunson judges presentations made by Provine High School students at the Career Development Center in Hinds County on April 24. Photo by Judi Craddock.



Above: Precious memories! This is a picture made at one of the first conservation carnivals for Hinds County. Included in the picture: (Standing) Joyce LoCascio (deceased), Suzanne Rimes, Becky McNair, Judi Craddock, Lynn Porter, Jo Patrick, and a retired teacher (name unknown but deceased). (Sitting) Ann Mashburn (deceased), Deborah Logan, Nicole May Kitchens, and Kathy Hancock. *Photographer unknown.*

Right: Outstanding in his field! Mike Lilly, retired State Soil Scientist and ACES employee, collected soil samples for use in Hinds County for educational purposes. *Photo by Judi Craddock.*





Area Supervisory Engineer Shannon McCarty presents E.J. with a plaque for 30 years of federal service.

E. J. MAKES RETIREMENT REALLY LOOK GOOD!

The Area Office enjoyed a little retirement send-off in January for E.J. Tynes, Soil Conservation Technician on the Area 2 Staff. As you can see from some of these pictures, E.J. is doing really well enjoying his retirement. We also get to visit with him as he regularly stops by for lunches at his favorite "Azteca" restaurant. He told us he golfs almost every day and spends a lot of time with his new Golden Retriever puppy, Misty. He and his wife, Klinner, have scheduled a few vacation trips too. Happy Trails, E.J.! We miss you already!



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